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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (5/02): IN PRAISE OF FAYYAD'S  
ECONOMIC PLAN

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Main Stories:  
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The dailies report that Palestinian President Abbas underwent angioplasty at a Jordanian hospital on April 01. Palestinian Presidency Spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudayna confirmed that Abbas is doing fine and will return to the Palestinian Territories on May 2. Related coverage on the front pages, highlights Abbas' comments to official Palestinian TV that, "we support all Egyptian efforts [regarding a truce and internal reconciliation] without reservation." Citing AFP, the dailies highlight that Abbas received a telephone call from senior Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahar, who wanted to, "make sure that Abbas is doing well." The dailies said that no further details were revealed about their conversation.

Positive coverage appears on the front pages regarding the May 2 donors' conference in London. Al-Quds headlines that Secretary Rice stated en route to London that, "Israel should present painful and difficult compromises in the interest of its security [sic]." The dailies highlight that Rice confirmed that efforts are being made to attract American business investment to East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Separate coverage on the front pages of the dailies highlight three new Israeli conditions for a proposed truce with the Palestinians. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reports that the new conditions could torpedo the truce. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mekel listed the conditions as: militant organizations must stop firing rockets and mortars at southern Israel, attacks inside Israel and along the Israeli-Gaza border must cease and weapons smuggling into Gaza must end.

According to Al-Ayyam, Israeli Interior Minister Shitreet said, "We refuse any truce with Hamas." The dailies report that Egyptian President Mubarak discussed with Israeli Premier Olmert, on May 2, ongoing efforts for a truce.

Citing Haaretz, the front page of Al-Quds reported that Israeli Minister of Infrastructure gave the "green light" for five new water projects in West Bank settlements.

The dailies reported that an Al-Qassam Hamas activist and an elderly man were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza. According to the coverage, the Israeli military conducted a wide-scale operation in Gaza on May 1 that resulted in extensive agricultural damage. Related coverage on Al Quds front page highlights that Israeli authorities have tightened the closure on the West Bank.

The front pages of the dailies report on protests and gatherings throughout the West Bank and Gaza marking "Worker's Day". Al Quds and Al Hayat Al Jadida run photos of flag-waving demonstrators in Ramallah and demonstrators in Gaza holding banners calling for an end to the Israeli blockade and blaming the "occupation" for high unemployment. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida further reports that Palestinian President Abbas has called for a general workers conference.

According to an opinion poll conducted by Near East Consulting, Fatah's popularity among Palestinians is rising. Most Palestinians also support a truce with Israel. Moreover, most Palestinians support early presidential and legislative elections.

The front pages of the three dailies report that Israeli Prime Minister Olmert will be questioned by police regarding allegations of bribery. Olmert is a suspect in several corruption scandals involving property deals and questionable political appointments,

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but has never been charged, according to the dailies.

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¶1. Independent Al-Quds runs its daily editorial entitled "Palestinian workers on their day" (5/02): "It is important during the celebration of international workers' day to recommit to the importance of development projects for industry, agriculture, tourism and infrastructure that allow our people new opportunities for the employment of thousands of unemployed Palestinians. It is not enough to give small amounts of monthly aid to families. Rather they should be brought back into the work force to provide them with continuous work that ensures dignity. This is a core duty that should be among the top priorities of the Palestinian Authorities'... future economic plans. In this regard, we should value the development plan that has been adopted by the government of Dr. Salam Fayyad, and we wait to see its outcome..."

¶2. Independent Al-Ayyam runs an op-ed by veteran columnist Samih Shbaib, entitled "The [nakba's] catastrophes' sixth anniversary" (5/02): "...the commemoration of the catastrophe, is for us, Palestinians, a marker of the separation of human beings from their land and creation of a new situation where most Palestinians have become refugees in Arab states and the diaspora... Israel is a state that was established by international law, and by a clear violation of the principles of human rights... Israel has also created laws that aggravate the refugee problem and have eroded refugee's basic rights..."

WALLES